SPOTLIGHT ON BEE GEES

We're bringing the spotlight down on The Bee Gees with the aim of showing you the side of the boys you don't already know. This week it's The Bee Gees English scene and later we'll bring you into line with the Australian scene.

TRAILING a spotlight on to The Bee Gees when they're not on stage must be one of the hardest things to do, because the boys go out of their way not to be thrust into the public eye.

From the days when the Gibb brothers were very young, their father, himself an ex-band leader, told them to always remain elusive. His stock phrase was "familiarity breeds contempt" and with that firmly fixed in their minds the three brothers started out on their pop career. Colin and Vince were soon to follow suit.

One of the few criticisms of the group is that they are aloof, but Mr. Hughie Gibb, the brothers' father who also acts as their tour manager, explained that to me.

"I have always told them to remain a little bit away from other people. As boys they aren't aloof, they are friendly, it's just that they know to remain at the top in show business you mustn't be too familiar with fans and the people around you."

But with the aid of Mr. Hughie Gibb, Mrs. Barbara Gibb, brother Andy and friends of the five boys I have been able to get to know more about the boys. FAB has trailed its own spotlight on to the group, and found out some interesting things.

Out of the five Bee Gees, Robin is perhaps the most fascinating and perhaps the main culprit of this aloof impression the group has.

He is a very withdrawn person, keeps himself to himself, doesn't like night life, and is very emotional and sensitive.

His dad told me: "He is a very nervous person, for example he hates lifts. He'd sooner walk up ten flights of stairs than use a lift. I think it's claustrophobia as well as fear. When we went to America he wouldn't go up the Empire State Building. He tried three times but each time couldn't make it. It got so bad some years back that with Barry he wrote a song called *Claustrophobia*.

"He hates planes, I think it's fear again, but we travel so much he has to put up with them. But he'll never go on these charter planes, he hates small planes, but he can just about stand the big jets. He always wears a St. Christopher, all the boys do."

Mum, Mrs. Barbara Gibb, said: "He's a fanatic about his food. He always inspects his knife and fork to make sure they're clean, many's the time he's sent a fork back to me because he thinks it's dirty.

"He's more artistic than the others in every way. He has got beautiful hands, and really looks after them. His nails are long and slender, and in general he's very particular about his person. He uses his hands to express himself, if you cut them off he couldn't talk. He wears suits all the time, he'll never wear anything casual even in hot weather, he always worries about what he looks like.

"At the moment he's very interested in English history, especially the Tudor Period, and he reads history books whenever he's got a spare minute.

"He's a very touchy boy. If someone upsets him, he'll argue and appear very cold, but really he's been hurt."

Sister Lesley, mum of two beautiful babies, said of Robin "He is very difficult to get to know, he is very reserved. For example, we went to Rome and he only came out of his hotel room once. It isn't that he is unsociable—he's just like that. You have to be content to do what he wants to do otherwise you have to do things on your own."

Dad went on: "He's basically lazy, but not with his music. When it comes to anything physical he can't be bothered. If there was a wallet on the ground with £100 in it he'd walk over it rather than bend down to pick it up.

"He's a bit of a hypochondriac too. He worries about his health and if he gets a little pain he thinks it's the beginning of something awful. He has a check up with a Harley Street doctor every six months.

"Another thing about him, he always thinks he's right. It's just his generation I think, although the other boys aren't like it. Maybe he'll secretly know he's wrong but he's just so stubborn he won't give in. I'll tell you something though, he'll have words with you one minute, and he's got a bit of a temper sometimes, but you'll be good friends again the next minute. He doesn't hold things against people."

Mum added: "He's lovely though, very cuddly and friendly once you get to know him."

But Robin's twin, Maurice, is a different kettle of fish altogether.

SAID dad: "He just lives for today. He's the one out of the three of them that likes a bit of night life now and again. He likes to have a good time, and he doesn't worry about anything. He's everybody's friend, he's got a super sens of humour and he's so talkative. Lesley added "He goes out **his way to make you happy.**

Mum went on: "As soon as yo meet Maurice you know him. He a very outward person. He doesn have a care in the world. Maur spends his money, whereas Rob hoards it. Maurice will spend an spend until he's told to stop, an Maurice is the only one who have a drink now and again. Barry comes home he immediate wants a cup of tea, Robin wi probably ask for a glass of mil but Maurice could be tempted t have a stronger drink."

Here brother Andy, who's 1 and was off from school with a cold when I called at the family new house in Buckinghamshire said: "Maurice is my favourite brother, he's most friendly, he plays with me when he comes home. I don't like Robin, he doesn't talk to me."

Dad went on: "Barry and Robin are the two artistic ones. Maurice is much more practical he takes after me more, while Robin takes after his mum. Robin and Barry are the geniuses while Maurice is the better musician technically. When the other two have finished writing a song, Maurice goes over it and puts in the finishing touches. Wherever you hear an organ or a piano, that's Maurice.

"He's more practically minded than the others, who always seem to be thinking about something else. If I had something important to be done I'd ask Maurice to do it, because he is reliable, the other two are dreamers. It's just the way they are. But Robin and Barry are the 'naturals' when it comes to writing music."

Mum and dad and Lesley all agreed that Barry is the beautiful one. "He's as nice as he looks," mum laughed.

Dad said: "He likes to be the ostrich who puts his head in the sand. He hates rows, and if there's any trouble going on he just ignores it. He likes everything to be peaceful." Lesley agreed "Even if he knows he's right and you're wrong he'll give in to you rather than disagree."

"He is very emotional," mum added. "I've seen him so worked up over a sad film that his eyes have been full of tears. When he sings *Words* on stage and I'm there he looks up to where I'm sitting and sings the song to me.

"Nothing upsets him, except perhaps people talking while he's playing his guitar. He seems to be in the middle of Robin and Maurice, because he is easy-going and very sensitive."

MR. GIBB thinks Barry is a bit irresponsible. He said: "He's got a £600 bracelet on his wrist and it's always falling off. We often find it on the stage after a show, but he doesn't care. He wouldn't be upset if he lost it, he'd just buy another one. If he goes out he's quite likely to leave the TV or the hi-fi on. He's just got his mind so involved with other things he doesn't think."

Remembering when Barry was a kid his mum said: "He was always the most accident prone, he nearly died when he was 14 months old because he poured a pot of scalding hot tea over himself. During his life he's fractured his arm, had stitches in his lip and cut his head open. All the boys went through the usual children's illnesses, but Barry just always seemed to be hurting himself, he just always had his mind on some other thing. He's all right now though, but Maurice gets swollen glands and sore throats a lot, and Robin seems to get lots of colds."

The three boys seem to have a private wavelength which enables them to know each others thoughts.

Mrs. Gibb said: "When they were kids they never had the opportunity to make friends with other children, so they were always together. They've been really close all their lives, and even now I think they like each other better than they like the rest of the family."

One of the people who is nearly always with The Bee Gees is their road manager Dick Ashby.

Sitting in the group's lovely white Rolls-Royce he told me the side of the group he knows.

"When you first meet them you think they are rowing all the time but it is only on the surface. They'll have an argument and the next minute they are best friends again. They all think a lot of Barry and respect what he says.

"None of them really like the club scene, except perhaps Maurice, they are too involved in their work. The three brothers sometimes differ over their music but they just keep talking and talking until in the end they all agree.

"Barry is quiet, but he always gets what he wants out of life. He works hard, but money doesn't mean anything to him. It's nothing to him to just go and spend £200 on clothes. One thing he spends loads of money on are films because he has them brought to the flat. They cost £10 a time, I think, and he has at least one a night.

"Robin? He's the funny one, he's the born practical joker and is always up to something. On Barry's birthday he threw the cake in Maurice's face. Another trick he has is spraying foam shaving cream around your head while you're asleep so which ever way you turn you get covered in it.

"Maurice is really nice. He spends a lot of money too, not like Robin who keeps his. He's very keen on making films and likes to go out and make films of other groups and things.

"The two real individuals of the group are Colin and Vince. They are both very quiet and you never feel you've really got to know them.

"Colin is very timid, he takes pride in everything he owns, and he is a real genuine guy. He has all his clothes made because he likes them to be just right. Vince is the same. He likes everything of character, even the car he's got, a Bentley Continental, isn't very common. Vince is the best person you could hope to meet. Both of them are homely and domesticated, probably because they are married, but I think they wanted to be like that. It's just them you know.

"Robin does physical exercises every morning. If the group have to be up at 9 o'clock, he's up at 8 doing his exercises. He's very conscious of his health. He always reads his press cuttings and gets really upset if someone says something awful. Whereas the others might think, well that writer doesn't like us, Robin takes it to heart. Robin hates unpunctuality, he seems to be more particular about things like that than the others. All the others are more easy going than Robin, but they are involved with themselves, they have to be, music is their life. They all work very hard, for example during one period of working for nine weeks they had five days off."

PAMELA TOWNSEND

● *Family group: L to R Mum, brother Andy, Dad and sister Lesley.*